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ABSTRACT

This workplace skills course on communication strategies at work is designed to begin the process of building effective communication skills for use in the workplace as well as in personal relationships. Introductory material includes a course description and objectives. The course consists of four sessions, each of which has these components: objectives, topics, methods, materials list, teacher tips, and information sheets and handouts. Topics covered in the sessions include the following: the communication process; different personality types and strategies for dealing with others; active listening skills; assertiveness skills; confidence building; use of professional behavior and respect to gain cooperation; conflict resolution; and non-verbal messages. (YLB)

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Communication Strategies at Work

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PEOPLE RETRAINING for INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE

CE 070 170

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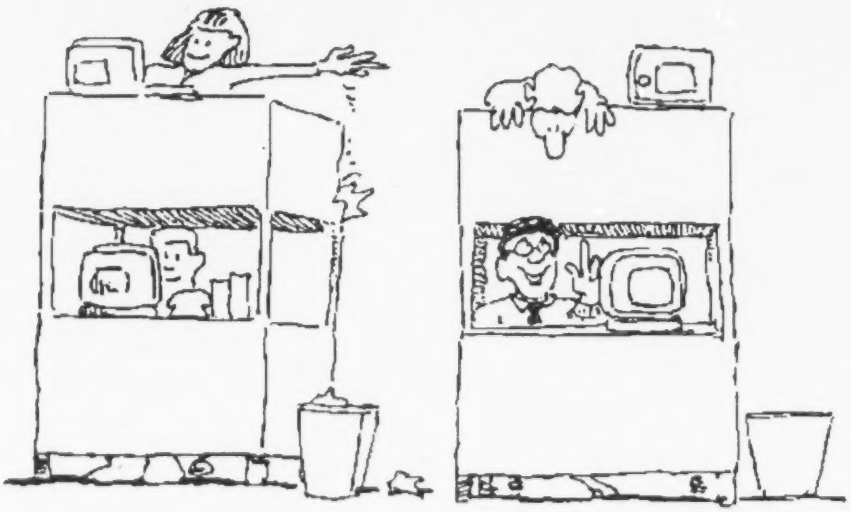
Communication Strategies at Work



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United States Department of Education

National Workplace Literacy Program

1995

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Mercer County Community College thanks Ave Pollak, Senior Education Specialist/Curriculum Developer for creating this manual. Through her valuable contributions employees in manufacturing and service industries learned concepts relevant to their existing jobs and strategies for learning other tasks if that opportunity should arise.

WORKPLACE SKILLS TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

A factory or service center creates a classroom that is very different from the one we are used to seeing in colleges and adult schools, so it only follows that our approach to teaching in the factory should also differ.

Our goal is to teach employees skills that they need in order to be functional and successful in their work environment, and encourage them to apply those skills on the job and at home. For example, we motivate students to do the following:

- work more efficiently and more safely
- make fewer mistakes
- solve problems working interactively
- take greater responsibility for their jobs
- recognize the interconnectedness of the various jobs in their workplace
- be better communicators in the workplace

Company needs are revealed through a needs assessment. At that time, we also determine the basic skills needs of the employees. We are learner centered, as the individual employee's needs are considered alongside those of the company.

Once we have determined those needs, we develop curricula that incorporate basic skills, using the workplace literature (e.g. forms, applications, codes, abbreviations, charts and tables, handbooks, regulations, procedures, policies, memos, letters) of the company. Because each company is different, the needs and literature are also different; hence, we develop new materials for every company in which we teach. By utilizing these workplace items, we help students transfer and apply their skills directly to their jobs.

We rely on the classroom techniques of problem solving, cooperative learning, and group discussion. Our overall approach is concept based, with the emphasis on application, such as in role plays, dialogues, and group work. Despite the specific course titles, we incorporate the elements of math, English, and communication skills into all of our sessions.

In terms of students evaluation, after initial testing we give a pre-test and post-test in order to determine comprehension. Students receive feedback throughout the course from the instructor, as well as from fellow students as we sincerely believe in the powerful positive reinforcement of peer critiques and cooperative exchanges.

In essence, we believe that although we make the materials for the students with which to work, it is the students who truly make the class.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AT WORK

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The communication between co-workers and with customers can make the difference between efficient productivity and wasted effort and mistakes. This course will begin the process of building effective communication skills for use in the workplace as well as in personal relationships.

OBJECTIVES:

As a result of this course, participants will be able to:

- Understand the communication process
- Identify different personality types and strategies for dealing with others
- Refresh skills in active listening
- Reinforce assertiveness skills
- Build confidence through positive self talk
- Use professional behavior and respect to gain cooperation
- Resolve conflicts using the skills learned
- Interpret and use non-verbal messages

OTHER:

- 0.6 C.E.U.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AT WORK ♦ SESSION 1

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- understand the path of a message
- practice active listening skills
- send a message accurately
- receive a message accurately

TOPICS:

- the path of a message
- active listening skills
- receiving and sending accurate messages

METHODS:

- pair work
- class discussion
- class activity

MATERIALS:

- one-way communication drawing
- worksheets
- video tape "From No to Yes"
- VCR

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 1

- Welcome, introductions and registration
- Discuss participants' goals/interests for the course
- Review course outline/objectives
- Engage participants in "One way communication exercise"
  ⇒ Request a volunteer who will be giving directions to the others; no questions may be asked as this exercise progresses. When the directions for the diagram have been given, the volunteer may show the actual diagram to all. Process the communication (or lack thereof) and draw examples of one-way communication in the workplace. Discuss.
- Using the handout on "Active Listening" and "Effective Communication", highlight key points and draw ideas from participants.
- As a group watch a short segment (approximately the first 10 minutes) of the video "From No to Yes" for further exploration of active listening concepts. Discuss.
- Group exercise: In pairs, each person gets a two minute time period to talk about a subject of their choice. After the first two minutes time is called and the speaker comments on the active listening skills of the listener. Then roles are reversed for the second two minute time period. Time is called and feedback is given to the listener. Discuss the experience as a group and any frustration, awareness and or insights.
- Distribute and discuss "Sender – Receiver" diagram.
- Distribute and discuss "What happens when you listen".

RATE YOURSELF AS A LISTENER

The following is a list of ten characteristics of a good listener. On a scale of 1 – 5, with five being the highest, fill in the blank to indicate the degree to which you already practice these positive listening behaviors. Go through the list twice, first rating yourself with the person you listen to the best, then rating yourself with the person to whom you find it most difficult to listen.

	BEST☑	**WORST☒**	
1.	_____	_____	I make regular eye contact with the speaker.
2.	_____	_____	I ask questions for clarification.
3.	_____	_____	I show concern by acknowledging feelings.
4.	_____	_____	I restate or paraphrase some of the speaker's words to show that I understand.
5.	_____	_____	I seek first to understand, then to be understood.
6.	_____	_____	I am poised and emotionally controlled.
7.	_____	_____	I react nonverbally, with a smile, a nod, a frown, or a touch, if appropriate.
8.	_____	_____	I pay close attention and do not let my mind wander.
9.	_____	_____	I act responsibly on what I hear.
10.	_____	_____	I don't change the subject without warning.

RATE YOURSELF AS A LISTENER (CON'T)

The following is a list of ten bad listening habits. On a scale of 1 – 5, with five being the worst case, indicate the degree to which you are guilty of these poor listening habits. Rate yourself twice, first with the person you listen to the best, then with the person to whom you find it most difficult to listen. Be honest with yourself. Recognizing how you listen is the first step toward constructive change.

	BEST☑	WORST☒	
1.	_____	_____	I interrupt often.
2.	_____	_____	I jump to conclusions.
3.	_____	_____	I finish other people's sentences.
4.	_____	_____	I am parental, and answer with advice.
5.	_____	_____	I make up my mind before I have all of information.
6.	_____	_____	I am a compulsive note taker.
7.	_____	_____	I don't give any response.
8.	_____	_____	I am impatient.
9.	_____	_____	I lose my temper.
10.	_____	_____	I think about my reply while the other person is speaking.

KEY INGREDIENTS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

To send an accurate message:

☑ Own your message – Present how you feel, rather than how others make you feel. Placing blame causes people to put up defenses rather than be willing to look for a solution.

☑ Be specific – Make your message complete. Do not assume the receiver knows what you mean, or can fill in ideas you leave out.

☑ Avoid mixed messages – Send the same message verbally as non-verbally.

☑ Repeat your message – Repeating helps understanding and remembering.

☑ Get feedback – Ask the receiver to tell you what the message means.

☑ Describe behavior – Give specific examples of behavior without judging it.

☑ Overcome assumptions – Be aware of attitudes that may be interfering with the sending of your message.

To receive an accurate message:

☑ Check for understanding – Ask what the sender means or restate in your own words.

☑ Overcome assumptions – Be aware of attitudes that may be interfering with your ability to "receive" the message.

☑ Clearly understand before replying – The communication will get very confused if you respond to something different than what was meant.

THE ART OF ACTIVE LISTENING

The key to good listening is being a good audience – in other words, <u>wanting</u> to hear what the other person has to say.

? ? ? Huh ? ? ?

<u>Step 1</u> – ***overcome or reduce*** listening barriers

- ◊ try to keep your attention focused
- ◊ overcome distractions in the environment
- ◊ overcome the negative nature of the conversation
- ◊ bring your concentration back to listening
- ◊ don't drift off into your own thoughts about your response

<u>Step 2</u> – ***practice*** these active listening skills

- ◊ encourage the expression of feelings
- ◊ listen for ideas and feelings
- ◊ notice attitudes and non-verbal cues
- ◊ give accurate and timely feedback
- ◊ carefully restate
- ◊ ask open-ended questions
- ◊ allow other person to fully express without interruptions
- ◊ withhold judgments or opinions
- ◊ avoids poor listening habits

HOW DO YOU GET/GIVE FEEDBACK?

Do you ask co-workers or customers for their thoughts, understanding or expectations? Do you give yours?

Feedback Strategy

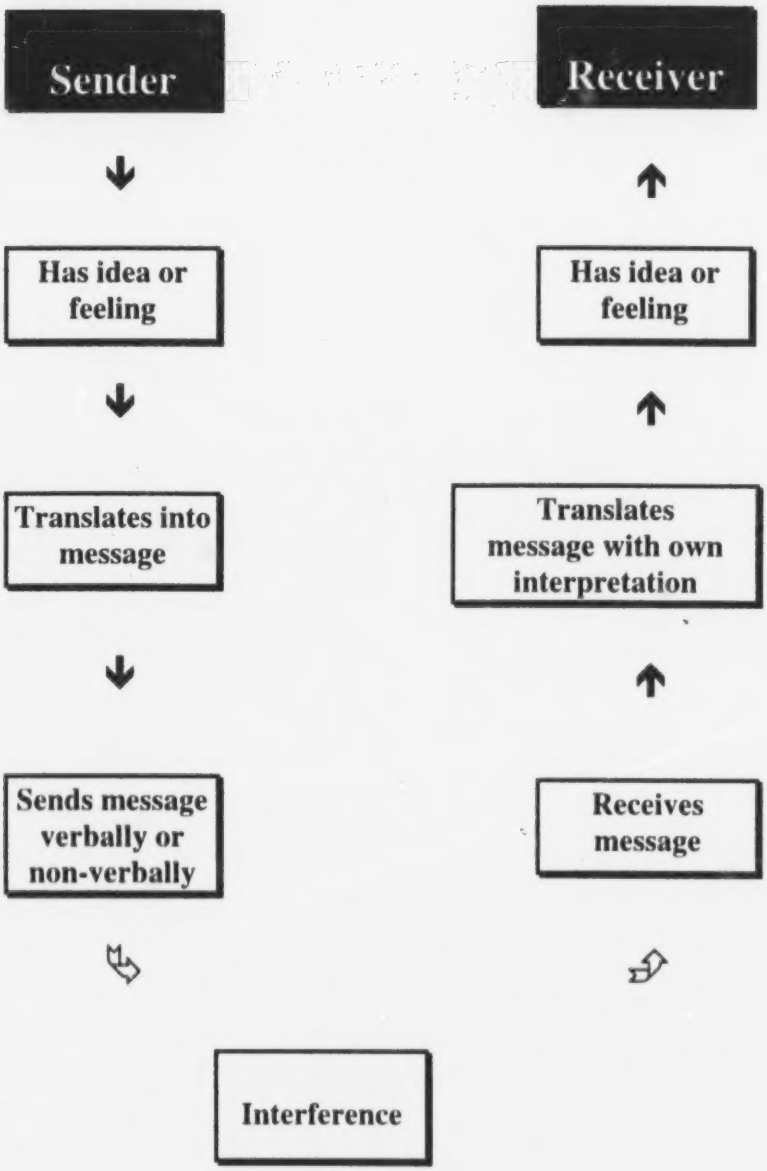
* Ask
* Listen actively
* Check for understanding
* Listen actively
* Use what you hear to clarify
* Restate

1. How will getting/giving feedback by using the strategy above help?

2. What might stop you from getting/giving feedback as described above?

3. Describe a work situation that exemplifies not getting or giving feedback appropriately. Discuss in your groups.

THE PATH OF THE MESSAGE



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU LISTEN?

❶ SENSING

Physically hearing the message

---

❷ INTERPRETING

Decoding and absorbing what you hear

---

❸ EVALUATING

Forming an opinion about the message

---

❹ REMEMBERING

Storing the message for future reference

---

❺ RESPONDING

Acknowledging the message by reacting in some way

KEY INGREDIENTS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

To SEND an accurate message

- ***Own your message*** – Present how you feel, rather than how others make you feel. Placing blame causes people to put up defenses rather than be willing to look for a solution.
  ☹ Example: I feel angry when you...

- ***Be specific*** – Make your message complete. Do not assume the receiver knows what you mean, or can fill in ideas you leave out.
  ✗ Example: You need to place twelve boxes in the carton.

- ***Avoid mixed messages*** – Send the same message verbally as non-verbally.

- ***Repeat your message*** – Repeating helps understanding and remembering.

- ***Get feedback*** – Ask the receiver to tell you what the message means.

- ***Describe behavior*** – Give specific examples of behavior without judging it.

- ***Overcome assumptions*** – Be aware of attitudes that may be interfering with the sending of your message.

KEY INGREDIENTS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

To RECEIVE an accurate message

- **Check for understanding** – Ask what the sender means or restate in your own words.

- **Overcome assumptions** – Be aware of attitudes that may be interfering with your ability to "receive" the message.

- **Clearly understand before replying** – The communication will get very confused if you respond to something different than what was meant.

COOL, CALM AND PROFESSIONAL

Sometimes it is difficult to remain calm and act in a professional manner especially when dealing with difficult people.

Here are a few tips:

The best way to work with difficult people is to approach them professionally and not personally.

Move away from the feelings that are part of the personal response [feeling hurt, mistreated, guilty, lost your cool, said things which you later regretted] and into your rational response [focus on what needs to be done].

Being professional means keeping the spotlight on the issue under discussion and away from yourself.

Say this...	**Instead of this...**
How can we solve the situation?	He is accusing me of making a mistake.
Will you please tell me what needs to be done?	She can't talk to me like that.
This isn't the kind of service we want to provide. What can we do to correct this situation?	You're not perfect. You make mistakes too.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AT WORK ♦ SESSION 2

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- use verbal and non-verbal cues for communication
- develop personal techniques for communicating professionally
- understand aggressive, non-assertive, and assertive style of communication

TOPICS:

- verbal and non-verbal signals
- "professional" communication
- dealing with all types of people
- aggressive, non-assertive, assertive behavior

METHODS:

- pair work
- class discussion
- class activities
- roleplays

MATERIALS:

- worksheets
- VCR

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 2

- Field questions or comments from previous session.
- Using hand-out, brainstorm behavioral characteristics that convey a professional manner. Discuss work examples but do not use names.
- Distribute "Body Language" checklist and discuss non-verbal messages
  ⇒ Show 10 minute segment of videotape to illustrate verbal and non-verbal messages. Discuss.
- Discuss the differences between Assertive, Nonassertive and Aggressive styles of communicating and distribute hand-out.
- Take "Assertiveness Quiz" and discuss. Have group generate examples of occasions when they might **choose** Nonassertive or Aggressive communication style.

COMMUNICATING PROFESSIONALLY

The best way to handle both those inside and outside of the organization is to take each situation professionally and not personally.

If you hear yourself making statements like the following, you are taking the situation personally.

1. I can't deal with someone who acts like a jerk.
2. You don't know the people I work with.
3. It's not that easy.
4. Do you know what he/she said?
5. They didn't even...
6. I don't have to...
7. They never...
8. They always...
9. No one appreciates me.
10. I don't get paid enough to take things professionally.

ACTING PROFESSIONALLY...BREAKING IT DOWN

Think of someone who acts professionally.

- How does that person "communicate" that manner?

- What nonverbal signals are communicated?

- What assumptions do you make about that person? (e.g. smart, confident, mature, good at their job, etc.)

Think of someone whose ability to act professionally is poor.

- How does that person "communicate" that manner?

- What nonverbal signals are communicated?

- What assumptions do you make about that person? (e.g. disrespectful, immature, pushy, etc.)

COMMUNICATE TO COOPERATE

- People like to be **treated with respect**.
- People like to feel as though they are **valued**.
- Isn't this how you treat your customers? [i.e. that their needs are important; that you take their problems seriously and will work towards a solution promptly; that you will keep them informed of your efforts; that you treat them respectfully and professionally even if you don't like them or their manner.]

So, treat your co-workers and your boss as customers! You will get more cooperation, save time, and get respect (as you give it).

1. Why might someone hesitate to do this?

2. How can you save time by getting better cooperation?

3. What are some other practical reasons to treat you internal colleagues as external customers?

   a) boss

   b) co-worker

DEALING WITH PEOPLE

Look at the following characteristics (listed as strengths and limitations) of different personality types. [Do you see yourself as mostly "A" with a little bit of "D"?]

Think about yourself, which personality types you *would* best work with, and which you would have the most difficulty with.

Now consider the people you *are* working with. Is there a difficult mix for you? How can you cope and have a better working relationship?

A

Strengths	Limitations
Persuasive	Pushy
Risk taker	Overbearing
Confident	Impatient
Inspiring	Abrasive
Outgoing	Dominating

B

Strengths	Limitations
Practical	Lives by the rules
Orderly	Stubborn
Very direct	Unapproachable
Organized	Critical
Traditional	Insensitive

DEALING WITH PEOPLE (CON'T)

C

Strengths	Limitations
Team oriented	Too other oriented
Caring	Indecisive
Enthusiastic	Vulnerable
Peacemaker	Hesitant

D

Strengths	Limitations
Exacting	Slow to get things done
Thorough	Perfectionistic
Reserved	Withdrawn
Has high standards	Shy

ROLEPLAY

Marie and Charles are planning for a customer order.

M: You have to get all of this down on paper for final approval.

C: We haven't agreed yet. I don't think we have gotten exactly what the X-Y people are looking for. If you remember, they specifically requested that the materials be easy to pull out from the packet. Try this. Do you really think this would satisfy them?

M: Why do you always disagree with me? We have to work as a team!

C: I don't know where you come up with that idea. You are jumping to conclusions. Now let's get back to talking about X-Y.

LATER

Marie to her manager

M: Here is the proposal for the X-Y order. I'm ready to FAX it to them.

Manager: I'll look it over and talk to you and Charles in about 15 minutes.

M: You know, Charles isn't very easy to work with. Even the X-Y people have noticed it. I tried to keep everything running smoothly though.

LEARN TO CLASSIFY BEHAVIORS

Your actions may be labeled as...

AGGRESSIVE *express yourself; dominate, set others straight; do it your way, get what you want; disregard feelings of others. You are thoughtless, rude, intimidating, look out for #1; out to get own way; abrasive; ambitious.

NON-ASSERTIVE *deny yourself; avoid risks; stay out of trouble; quiet; put yourself down; avoid hurting others; want to be liked; pushover; low self-esteem; lack confidence; hide your anger; allow others to take advantage of you; failure to gain your goals.

ASSERTIVE *express yourself in honest and direct manner; respect yourself and others; you care; friendly; confident; cooperative; make positive statements; stand up for your beliefs and rights; not intimidated by others; not afraid to confront others; equality in relationships; will not put self or others down.

COMMUNICATING WITH OTHERS ABOUT PROBLEMS

1. The **AGGRESSIVE** approach
   - ◊ blaming/attacking
   - ◊ intimidating – in body language and tone of voice
   - ◊ wants to get own way
   - ◊ effect on others: resentment, fear; barriers go up

2. The **JUDGMENTAL** approach
   - ◊ expresses your honest opinion but...
   - ◊ people resent being told what they should/shouldn't do; what is right/wrong
   - ◊ critical without considering this a communication pitfall
   - ◊ effect on others: leads to arguments

3. The **SARCASTIC** approach
   - ◊ implies contempt; edge in voice, eyes convey dissatisfaction
   - ◊ others are not sure if humor is intended; may not want to seem overly sensitive
   - ◊ usually there is some underlying anger
   - ◊ effect on others: creates tension, suspicion and people feel hurt

4. The **PLEADING/NON-ASSERTIVE** approach
   - ◊ tries to avoid conflict
   - ◊ person seems weak; eyes often downcast or otherwise avoiding; shoulders slumped
   - ◊ often lack self confidence and have low self esteem
   - ◊ effect on others: message loses impact

5. The **ASSERTIVE** approach
   - ◊ honest and direct manner without blame or being offensive
   - ◊ eye contact; confidence shows in body posture and tone of voice
   - ◊ stands up for self and confronts others when necessary in a respectful way
   - ◊ effect on others: creates constructive atmosphere of mutual respect, frankness

ASSERTIVENESS QUIZ

Before learning how to develop your assertiveness, it is important to take a few moments to get some idea of where you are right now. Answer the questions below honestly. They will help you gain some insights about your current level of assertiveness.

Use the scale 5 to 1 as described for your answers.

ALWAYS				NEVER
5	4	3	2	1

_____ 1. I say "No" without feeling guilty, particularly when someone asks me to do something I do not want to do.

_____ 2. I ask others to do things without feeling apologetic or anxious

_____ 3. I confidently express my honest opinion to authority figures.

_____ 4. When I experience feelings of anger, frustration, disappointment, etc., I verbalize them easily.

_____ 5. When I express anger, I do so without blaming others for "making me mad".

_____ 6. When I make a mistake, I acknowledge it.

_____ 7. If I disagree with the majority in a meeting, I can "stick to my guns" without feeling uncomfortable or being abrasive.

_____ 8. When discussing my beliefs/opinions, I do so without labeling the opinions of others as "crazy", "stupid", "ridiculous", or "unrealistic".

_____ 9. When considering doing something I have never done, I feel confident I can learn to do it.

_____ 10. I generally have confidence in my own judgment.

_____ **TOTAL SCORE**

[50 – 36 points indicates good practice of assertiveness.]
[35 – below indicates a need to improve your assertiveness skills]

ROLEPLAY

You and your co-workers in motors and assembly have worked very hard to process the materials for a customer's order. Unfortunately, because of a communication breakdown somewhere, neither the Paint Shop nor the Shipping Department were alerted to the top priority status given to this. The supervisors involved are just about to meet.

Describe this interaction in an aggressive style:

Describe this interaction in an avoiding style:

Describe this interaction in an assertive style:

ROLEPLAY

Your co-workers in production have worked very hard to mix the pigments and make the paint for a customer's order. The lab and quality control people have given their O.K. Unfortunately, because of a communication breakdown somewhere, the Assembly supervisor did not set up for the tubes to be labeled and this order will be later than promised to the customer. The supervisors involved are just about to meet.

Describe this interaction in an aggressive style:

Describe this interaction in an avoiding style:

Describe this interaction in an assertive style:

ROLEPLAY

Since the original forecasting was done for this job, some changes became necessary. Although you received notice of the changes two days ago, some of your colleagues in Operations have just told the line supervisors. In turn, they now must shift the day's production plans. Unfortunately, there has been a communication breakdown somewhere. The managers/supervisors involved are just about to meet.

Describe this interaction in an aggressive style:

Describe this interaction in an avoiding style:

Describe this interaction in an assertive style:

ROLEPLAY

The pigments are not where the bill of materials (job card?) indicate. After searching around, a partial supply has been found. Now your supervisor is checking out who used the materials, and why that information wasn't recorded in the log. It has taken almost two hours to get to this point. Now the supervisors involved are about to meet but your supervisor is upset.

Describe this interaction in an aggressive style:

Describe this interaction in an avoiding style:

Describe this interaction in an assertive style:

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AT WORK ♦ SESSION 3

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- understand the importance of body language
- use appropriate body language to convey message
- interpret body language correctly
- recognize behavior types
- deal with aggressive and passive types

TOPICS:

- body language
- behavior types
- recognizing personality types

METHODS:

- pair work
- class discussion
- class activity

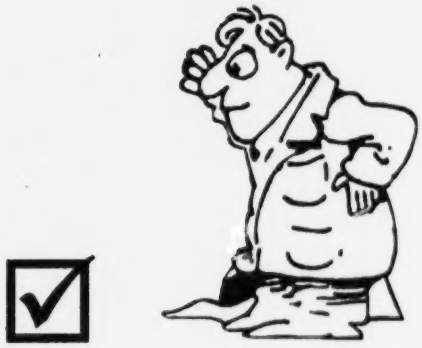
MATERIALS:

- role plays
- video tape "From No to Yes"
- VCR

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 3

- Hand out "Check your body language" for specific characteristics.
- Replay video segment from Session I but with no sound.
- Have participants observe body language and discuss.
- Complete worksheet "Self Checklist" pages 1 and 2 and discuss.
- Hand out "Reading others' signals" if there is time. This may have to continue into Session IV. Discuss.

SELF CHECKLIST



Where do you usually look when you are listening?

What are the conditions/situations that may affect your eye contact?

Give examples:_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you play with a pen/pencil, drum your fingers, shake you foot, tap your foot when you are listening or talking? _____

_____

_____

_____

What **signals** do you think you are sending and how do you think your listener might "read" your signals? _____

_____

_____

_____

FACIAL EXPRESSION – SELF CHECKLIST

☞ Imagine what your face looks like (usually frowning? unreadable? etc.)

☞ **Sneak** a look at your face in a mirror (in the car) or a window reflection and see what others see.

☞ Also **see** your own body posture.

✧What do you think you are conveying?

✧Is it the **message you intend**?

✧Do you need to make some changes?

BODY LANGUAGE – SELF CHECKLIST

Our body gestures, movements, and positions can reveal as strong a message as can our words – sometimes our body language is even stronger or contradictory to the message we are speaking.

Below are some examples of typical types body language as they are associated with different behavior types. Check those that apply to you, then consider if you fall into a pattern or behavior type.

Assertive

- ☐ Direct eye contact
- ☐ Open and relaxed facial expression
- ☐ Firm voice
- ☐ Emphasis on key words
- ☐ Well-balanced posture
- ☐ Relaxed demeanor
- ☐ Appropriate gesture to emphasize key points

BODY LANGUAGE – SELF CHECKLIST

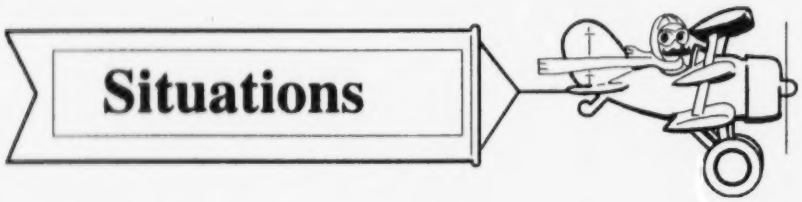
Aggressive

- ☐ Stare into distance
- ☐ Tight-lipped
- ☐ Rapid speech
- ☐ Condescending manner
- ☐ Pointing finger
- ☐ Bored expression
- ☐ Clenched teeth
- ☐ Overly loud
- ☐ Pounding fists
- ☐ Hands on hips

Non-assertive

- ☐ Downcast eyes
- ☐ Inappropriate smiling
- ☐ Biting lips
- ☐ Clearing throat
- ☐ Very soft speech
- ☐ Covering mouth when speaking
- ☐ Excessive smiling
- ☐ Rapid blinking
- ☐ Inappropriate laughter
- ☐ Wetting lips
- ☐ Wrinkled forehead
- ☐ Whining
- ☐ Excessive nodding
- ☐ Fiddling with hair, glasses, jewelry

CASE STUDY SITUATIONS



◊ Your supervisor is griping at you because you didn't indicate that there was a problem with a particular batch of bottles. What do you do?

◊ You are confronting your line supervisor over the misuse of the machinery by your co-worker. The result is a problem which you unhappily correct repeatedly.

◊ The time for employee review is here and lately you haven't been getting along too well with your boss. What do you do?

◊ You have been asked to train the new temp on the machinery. This is not your job, but your supervisor feels that you are a very good peer instructor, and he doesn't have the time to train the temp himself. Your supervisor just asked you to start the training this morning.

◊ You need another day off to take your child to the doctor. You hate to ask but must ask for this day.

With each of the situations above, consider these :

- What might your *eye contact* be? Why?
- What might you be doing with other *body parts*? What motions?
- What might your *face and body posture* be?

"READING" OTHERS' SIGNALS

1. Andy has just come back from a meeting with his supervisor. Now Andy is throwing some papers on the worktable, is muttering to himself and his face is in a growl.

   ⇨ *What signals would you read from this?*

2. Your supervisor, Rick, looks bad today. He mentioned that he slept very little last night because he was worrying about some production problems. He is cracking his knuckles repeatedly. Your comment (made with humor) that he should have a few beers and chill-out, caused him to give you an icy stare. So you are about to make another "joke" to help him relax.

   ⇨ *What is happening here?*

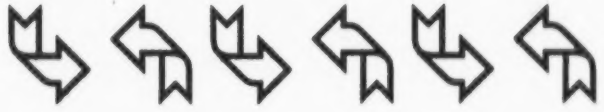
3. You want to ask for a day off later this week. (The "rush" order should be completed by then.) Your boss is rushing off to a supervisor's meeting and seems grouchy.

   ⇨ *What signals would you read and how might the non-verbal cues affect your behavior?*

4. Your husband/wife has just walked in after work and sees you sitting on the couch watching T.V. He/she asks if you did any of the household chores and you bark "Leave me alone!! I worked all day and need some time to relax!" With that, he/she slams the door to the refrigerator and is banging things around on the counter.

   ⇨ *What is happening here?*

WE THINK WE ARE BEING ABSOLUTELY CLEAR . . .



Here are some examples of *confused communication* that can occur due to the way we speak:

- "I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment."
- "I had been shopping for plants and was on my way home. As I reached an intersection, a hedge sprang up, obscuring my vision."
- "The other car collided with mine without giving warning of its intentions."
- "In my attempt to kill a fly, I drove into a telephone pole."
- "The neighbor's dog ran in front of my lawn mower and my other neighbor yelled to stop me – I didn't mean to run him over, but he was always a nuisance."
- "I talked to Steve, and he said George told him that he was going to get in trouble because he told his boss he was late again."

Often, we hear the above, recognize the confused communication, try to make sense of it anyway, and clarify the idea in our own minds. What about those occasions when we have decoded it wrongly?

COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES AT WORK ♦ SESSION 4

OBJECTIVES:

At the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- understand the importance of being assertive
- resolve conflict in a constructive manner
- recognize the four conflict resolution styles

TOPICS:

- conflict resolution
- conflict identification
- recognizing conflict resolution styles

METHODS:

- pair work
- class discussion
- class activity

MATERIALS:

- roleplays

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 4

- Continue reviewing assertiveness skills and complete "Assertiveness Quiz" if not completed previously. Discuss using these skills in "real" situations.

- Examine personality types through clustering of strengths and limitations – use hand-out and have group respond to the questions on the worksheet.

- Distribute worksheet titled "Communicating through Conflict". Have participants complete in small groups and then discuss as a whole noting key issues on the board or flip chart. Discuss implementing the skills highlighted from all sessions of this course in handling conflict.

- Using hand-out on making a complaint or giving criticism, discuss situations generated by the participants for appropriate use.

- Engage participants in "Roleplay"

- Course wrap-up and evaluation

CONSIDER CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

1. Think about those co-workers who are from another culture or country. What verbal and non-verbal communication differences do you observe?

2. Do you notice whether or not some of the accepted communication practices here are very different, perhaps even difficult for them? Give examples.

3. How do these differences affect your communication style toward those employees?

CONFLICT ON THE JOB AND COMMUNICATING THROUGH IT

Here are some typical sources of **conflict** found in the workplace. Can you think of an example you have observed here on the job for each category?

1. the **organizational structure** encourages conflict (perhaps by making workers compete against each other for special rewards)
   [give example]

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. co-workers are **aggressive**

   _____

   _____

   _____

3. **competition** for resources (e.g. only one computer for three workers)

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. **differences** in...
   facts and assumptions _____

   customs and habits _____

   goals and expectations _____

   roles _____

   methods and styles _____

CONFLICT ON THE JOB AND COMMUNICATING THROUGH IT

What do you do to communicate through the conflict?

- **Talk** about the problem – don't explode and don't be silent
- **Listen** to each other – you probably don't "see" the problem exactly the same
- **Use "I" messages** – (I feel...when you do/say...)
- **Problem solve** – negotiate
- **Choose** your response to the conflict – comply?, confront?, compromise? or remove the source of the conflict?
- **Evaluate** – in a week or a month. Is the solution working as you had hoped?

CONFLICT RESPONSE STYLES

These are what we call "Get My Way" behaviors because we use them when we insist on getting *our* way in a conflict, regardless of whether it is the *best* way.

Which ones have you used?

Helplessness

Excuses
Apologies
Sickness
"I'm trying"

Suffering

Hurt feelings
Crying
Worrying
Guilt
Jealousy
Depression
Withdrawal
Suicide

Anger

Shouting
Acting out
Demanding
Violent
Silent

Out of these behaviors, which do you think are appropriate? Which are inappropriate? What kinds of messages can they send? How do they help or hinder the conflict?

CONFLICT RESPONSE STYLES

The Four A's

Aggressive ⇨ cancels ***YOU***

Accepting ⇨ cancels ***ME***

Avoiding ⇨ cancels ***YOU and ME***

Assertive ⇨ cancels ***NO ONE!!***

CONFLICT RESPONSE STYLES

Read these responses to conflict and mark which style you think they represent. Use these abbreviations:

AG = aggressive **AV** = avoiding
AC = accepting **AS** = assertive

_____ 1. Be indirect; only hint at the problem that is bothering you.

_____ 2. Blame the situation on someone else or on something else.

_____ 3. Use sarcasm when talking to others about the situation.

_____ 4. Seek a scapegoat.

_____ 5. Make an active effort to smooth over the tension.

_____ 6. Blow up; let off steam; let people know exactly how you feel.

_____ 7. Hide your feelings at the moment and only reveal them later to friends in private.

_____ 8. Try to gather more information about the situation.

_____ 9. Put your energy and attention into other unrelated activities.

_____ 10. Spend some time listening to those involved.

_____ 11. Back down under pressure and don't deal with the problem.

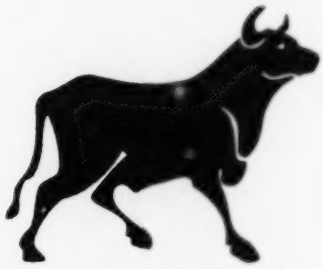
_____ 12. Make an active and sincere attempt to compromise.

_____ 13. Complain to others about the unfairness of the situation.

_____ 14. Make an effort to seek creative alternatives to the situation.

_____ 15. Always do as you are told – no questions asked.

THE INGREDIENTS OF AGGRESSIVENESS



Aggressive people can be spotted almost immediately because of their "in your face" approach!! They are often the kind of people that we feel uncomfortable with or intimidated by. Also, they tend to make a conflict much worse than it need be.

Do you recognize any of these aggressive behaviors in yourself?

- ◊ Shouting, not talking at a normal pitch
- ◊ Rolling your eyes or turning away from the group
- ◊ Sitting with hands folded across your chest
- ◊ Using gestures to show indifference or hostility
- ◊ Bullying people with threats, bad language, or with physical closeness

What other traits do you notice in aggressive people?

THE INGREDIENTS OF ACCEPTANCE

If aggressive people intimidate us with their bullish mentalities, then **passive** people drive us crazy with their escapist or "outta my face" attitudes!

Do you recognize any of these passive attitudes in yourself?

- ◊ weak voice or whisper
- ◊ backing down despite his/her beliefs
- ◊ constant nodding
- ◊ constant wetting of lips or wringing of hands
- ◊ indifference to what people say

What other passive or accepting types of behavior can you think of?

THE INGREDIENTS OF AVOIDANCE

People who **avoid** the conflict create a different problem – not only do they not participate in a resolution, but they often do not even acknowledge that there is in fact a problem.

Here are some traits of avoidance:

- ◊ finding a scapegoat
- ◊ doodling during discussions
- ◊ saying "I don't care" when asked to agree or disagree with a solution
- ◊ denying the facts of the situation and insisting that they are only opinions

What other avoidance techniques can you think of?

THE INGREDIENTS OF ASSERTIVENESS

Assertiveness is the best of all possible behavior types: it has the strength of aggression, but without the fury; it has the respect for others that shows in passiveness, but it is more participatory; and it has the acceptance of conflict with the willingness to make every best effort to resolve the issue.

These are the traits of assertiveness:

◊ ***Visual Clues and Body Language***

- ◊ direct eye contact
- ◊ keeping appropriate distance
- ◊ being aware of facial expressions
- ◊ speaking clearly
- ◊ having good posture
- ◊ using simple gestures for emphasis

◊ ***Vocal***

- ◊ loud, but not overpowering
- ◊ appropriate speed
- ◊ fluent speech without stumbling
- ◊ good word emphasis

CONFLICT ON THE JOB AND COMMUNICATING THROUGH IT

ROLEPLAY

You and your co-workers have worked very hard to get this batch through the machines in order to satisfy a promise made to the customer. The QC person has disapproved it. Now your supervisor is approaching you to find out what went wrong.

Describe this interaction in an aggressive style:_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe this interaction in an avoiding style:_____

_____

_____

_____

Describe this interaction in an assertive style:_____

_____

_____

_____

CONFLICT ON THE JOB AND COMMUNICATING THROUGH IT

ROLEPLAY

You and your co-workers in Receiving and Production have worked very hard to process the materials for a customer's order. Unfortunately, because of a communication breakdown somewhere, the Shipping Department was not alerted to the top priority status given to this and the Customer Service Rep. is walking determinedly toward those involved to find out what went wrong.

Describe this interaction in an aggressive style: _____

_____

_____

_____

Describe this interaction in an avoiding style: _____

_____

_____

_____

Describe this interaction in an assertive style: _____

_____

_____

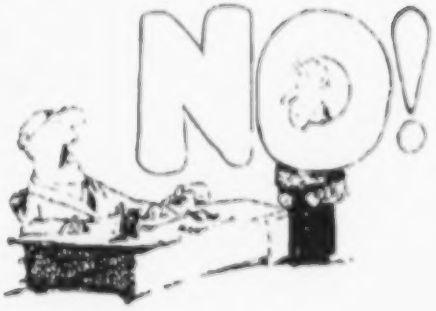
_____

WHEN COMPLAINING/CRITICIZING

When making a complaint

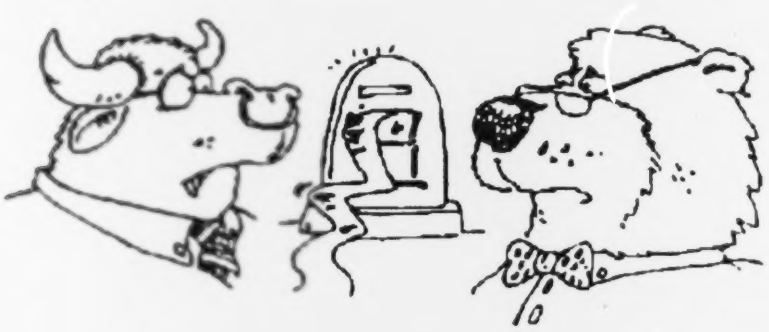
- ◊ decide what the problem is
- ◊ explain how you feel and why
- ◊ make your point briefly
- ◊ pause and wait for the response
- ◊ resist the urge to relieve the tension by further explanation

When criticizing someone



- ◊ start with genuine and specific praise
- ◊ try not to make him/her feel bad
- ◊ avoid putting him/her on the defensive
- ◊ describe and explain the problem without attacking the other person
- ◊ avoid inferences, cite observations
- ◊ be specific
- ◊ motivate the person to improve

ROLEPLAY

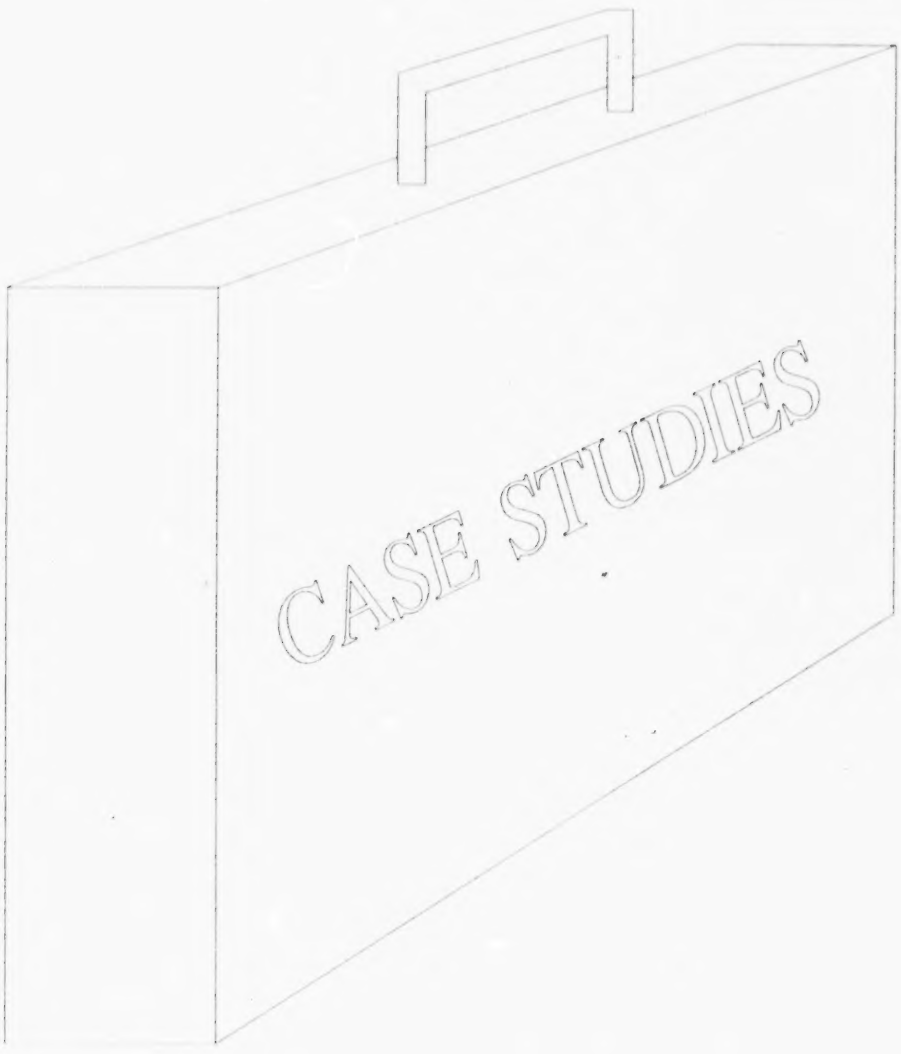


You are having a difficult conversation with someone in your department. Generally you do not like this person although you both manage to have a decent working relationship.

In your small group, **roleplay** this situation. As described above, **both** individuals may have **stopped** their active **listening** and **each** may be **blocking** good communication in their own way. Coach each other to play it out ineffectively.

Discuss your observations with each other.

Now **re-do the roleplay**, beginning with the communication breakdown and eventually moving toward improved communication using skills such as: active listening, checking for understanding, asking questions, keeping it on a professional not personal level, etc. Remember to coach each other.


CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY SITUATIONS

The "search item" and Quality Control have found the missing stock. Your supervisor is griping at you because you didn't locate it yourself and crucial time has been lost.

You are confronting your lead person over the sloppy work habits of the new employee in pick-pack and the added work it makes for you. You are questioning what seems like a lack of supervision.

The customer service rep for this job has already left for the day. But there are some problems that need to be resolved before you can have the temps proceed. Because you have not felt the necessary support from this customer service rep before, you are frustrated. You are trying to reach him/her by phone.

You need another day off to take your child to the doctor. You hate to ask but must ask for this day.

With each of the situations above, consider these :

- What might your *eye contact* be? Why?
- What might you be doing with other *body parts*? What motions?
- What might your *face and body posture* be?

CASE STUDY SITUATIONS

Mark from the Sales Department has a complaining customer and is now talking and gesturing wildly with Tom from Purchasing. Tom is explaining the purchase order procedures to him. As you walk by, Tom asks you if you know and follow these procedures.

You are confronting your lead person over the sloppy work habits of the new employee in assembly (e.g. picking up your tools but leaving them just anywhere) and the added work it makes for you. Since you have already asked the lead person to "train" this new employee, you are questioning what seems like a lack of supervision.

You are explaining the changes which are required for this assembly project to your co-worker whose English is not clear. You are frustrated because you are not sure if he/she is listening or understands.

You need another day off to take your child to the doctor. You hate to ask but must ask for this day.

With each of the situations above, consider these :

- What might your *eye contact* be? Why?
- What might you be doing with other *body parts*? What motions?
- What might your *face and body posture* be?

CASE STUDY SITUATIONS

Due to an error in data entry that seems to have occurred because of incorrectly labeled materials, there are now problems all the way down the production line. You have already had a frustrating morning and now you are griping at your supervisors about the mistakes made.

You are confronting your co-workers over the lack of communication regarding changes in formulation. The result is a problem which you unhappily have to correct repeatedly.

The quarterly report is coming due. Henry feels that he is not getting enough support from you in getting cooperation from the Marketing Department for information necessary to his report. Since this has happened before and he took the heat because of a late report, he is not about to let it happen again. Here he comes.

You need another day off to take your child to the doctor. You hate to ask but must ask for this day.

With each of the situations above, consider these :

- What might your *eye contact* be? Why?
- What might you be doing with other *body parts*? What motions?
- What might your *face and body posture* be?

CASE STUDY SITUATIONS

You have just been told that an error in data entry on the compounds ordered and now inventoried will effect the current production plans. Mike was informed one half hour ago and was supposed to tell you as soon as he saw you. But he forgot until now. You have already had a frustrating morning and now you are griping at Mike.

Your supervisor is confronting you over the lack of communication between you and a certain co-worker. The supervisor is saying that time and effort is wasted because the two of you don't keep each other well informed. [The co-worker is out today, so Mr. or Ms. Supervisor explains that he/she will speak to the co-worker too.]

Margaret is explaining a change in instructions to Reynaldo but she is not sure if he really understands all that she is saying. She feels uncomfortable talking with non-native English speakers.

You need another day off to take your child to the doctor. You hate to ask but must ask for this day.

With each of the situations above, consider these :

- What might your *eye contact* be? Why?
- What might you be doing with other *body parts*? What motions?
- What might your *face and body posture* be?